

APPENDIX I

PUBLIC POLICIES AFFECTING AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The City's public policies are generally favorable to affordable housing development, maintenance and improvement. City zoning provides for capacity to add a range of housing types in amounts exceeding planning goals (see Figure 2-27 in the *Housing Market Analysis* chapter of this Consolidated Plan). The following policies, programs, and proposals for consideration are aimed at helping to further enhance the supply of housing for a broad spectrum of income levels:

City policies and programs:

- In Downtown zones, unused development rights may be transferred from low-income housing sites to commercial development sites. In addition, Downtown commercial developers can make voluntary contributions to mitigate affordable housing and childcare-related impacts in order to build additional floor area in new office and hotel projects. In parts of Downtown, additional housing may be built through transfer of development credits from rural areas of King County.
- In 2003, the Seattle City Council unanimously approved legislation defining “live-work units” and establishing development standards for this unique hybrid use. The legislation allows live-work units in commercial, downtown, and some multifamily zones, subject to appropriate standards.
- In 2003, DPD implemented a number of important changes to the permit process to improve services for applicants. The changes address the goals of providing intake appointments within 10 days, including during the height of the construction season, and reviewing 75% of all building applications within 48 hours. The changes include a new drop-off feature to eliminate application appointments; a more flexible “consistently prepared applicants” program; a new repetitive plans program; emphasis on redlining to reduce the number and duration of correction cycles; reducing project stoppers (clearer and more consistent criteria for rejecting an application at intake); a solutions-oriented review effort; and moving coaching services to the Public Resource Center (a one-stop-shop).
- The City's minimum parking requirements are lower for low-income housing. There are no minimum parking requirements for housing (market-rate or affordable) in Downtown zones.
- Some area in each neighborhood in Seattle is zoned to allow mixed-use developments that include housing.
- The City's unit lot subdivision ordinances allow opportunities for homeownership on smaller unit lots in some zones, with development standards generally applied only the parent lot.

- The City has designated 17 urban villages in which developers of multifamily housing may qualify for tax exemptions under a State law intended to stimulate housing development.

City proposals for consideration:

- The City is considering providing height bonuses in selected neighborhoods in order to further stimulate affordable housing development in Seattle.
- The Mayor has proposed changes in parking and open space requirements to stimulate additional housing development in several neighborhoods.
- The Mayor is proposing Code changes for legislative consideration that would support the Comprehensive Plan's urban village strategy and promote higher levels of pedestrian and transit travel and maintain compatibility with surrounding neighborhoods.

State and County policies:

- Low-income senior and disabled homeowners can qualify for a reduction or deferral of their property taxes through the King County Assessor's Office.
- Washington state law generally prohibits ordinances imposing rent control on privately owned residential structures.
- Under the provisions of the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA), counties and certain municipalities must adopt Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) and local Comprehensive Plans that accommodate twenty years of urban growth. The CPPs establish 20-year growth targets for each jurisdiction and local plans must identify sufficient buildable land to accommodate this anticipated growth. In addition, the CPPs require jurisdictions to plan to accommodate affordable housing with approximately 17% of the growth target expected to be affordable to households earning between 50-80% of median income and 20-24% of the growth target expected to be affordable to those with incomes below 50% of median income. The GMA also requires local plans to identify sufficient land for government-assisted housing, housing for low-income families, manufactured housing, multifamily housing, and group homes and foster care facilities. The City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan complies with these requirements.